

1       **WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

2           1. A method of polling interactive television viewers, the method comprising:  
3           preparing a set of polling requests that each ask an interactive television viewer to  
4           select an element from a group of two or more elements;  
5           connecting to one or more set top systems of one or more interactive television  
6           viewers;  
7           sending the set of polling requests to the one or more set top systems of the one or  
8           more interactive television viewers;  
9           receiving responses to the set of polling requests from one or more interactive  
10           television viewers;  
11           evaluating the responses to the set of polling requests; and  
12           preparing a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the  
13           evaluation of the responses to the set of polling requests.

1           2. The method of claim 1 wherein two polling requests have two different sets of  
2           elements.

1           3. The method of claim 1 wherein each element appearing in the set of polling  
2           requests is different from the every other element appearing in the set of polling requests.

1           4. The method of claim 1 wherein evaluating the responses includes tallying the  
2           responses that have been received after a time limit.

1           5. The method of claim 4 wherein the time limit is applied relative to a period that  
2           begins when the polling request is initially displayed to an interactive television viewer.

1           6. The method of claim 4 wherein the time limit is common to all of the interactive  
2           television viewers.

1           7. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying particular content to the  
2           interactive television viewers based on evaluating the responses.

1           8. The method of claim 7 wherein the particular content includes a graphical user  
2           interface.

1           9. The method of claim 7 wherein the particular content includes multimedia data.

1           10. The method of claim 7 wherein displaying particular content to the interactive  
2           television viewer comprises displaying the particular content using the set top system.

1           11. The method of claim 1 further comprising designating polling rules for targeting  
2           the interactive television viewers.

1           12. The method of claim 11 further comprising determining context information of  
2           interactive television viewers.

1           13. The method of claim 12 further comprising applying the targeting rules to the  
2           context information to identify targeted interactive television viewers.

1           14. The method of claim 12 wherein determining the context information includes  
2           determining television programming being viewed by an interactive television viewer at a  
3           particular time.

1           15. The method of claim 14 wherein determining television programming being  
2           viewed comprises determining the television programming tuned to by a set top box.

1           16. The method of claim 14 wherein determining television programming being  
2           viewed comprises determining the television programming using an EPG.

1           17. The method of claim 1 further comprising determining context information  
2           associated with television programming available for delivery to the interactive television  
3           viewer.

1           18. The method of claim 17 wherein determining the context information associated  
2           with the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a  
3           television signal received by a set top box.

1           19. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with  
2           the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a channel  
3           identification number.

1        20. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with  
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a  
3 broadcaster identifier.

1        21. The method of 17 wherein preparing a set of polling requests includes preparing  
2 the polling requests based on context information associated with the television  
3 programming.

1        22. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with  
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a  
3 television series.

1        23. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with  
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon an  
3 episode of a television show.

1        24. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with  
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon an EPG  
3 identity.

1        25. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with  
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a  
3 program content category.

1        26. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes  
2 prompting the interactive television viewer to select one element in the polling request of two  
3 or more elements.

1        27. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes  
2 prompting an interactive television viewer to rank order a list of elements.

1        28. The method of claim 1 wherein determining two or more elements in the new  
2 polling request includes a most selected element in a first polling request and a most selected  
3 element in a second polling request.

1           29. The method of claim 28 wherein the set of polling requests continues until there  
2       is one element that has not been selected to a lesser degree than other elements in any polling  
3       request of the most selected elements and the other elements.

1           30. The method of claim 1 wherein evaluating the responses includes determining  
2       which element in the polling request received the most votes.

1           31. The method of claim 1 wherein determining two or more elements in the new  
2       polling request includes a least selected element in a first polling request and a least selected  
3       element in a second polling request.

1           32. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes  
2       sending an instant message.

1           33. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes  
2       sending an electronic mail message.

1           34. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes  
2       sending a display to overlay television programming.

1           35. A method of participating in an interactive television poll, the method  
2       comprising:  
3           connecting to a host;  
4           receiving a set of polling requests;  
5           completing the polling requests;  
6           transmitting the responses to the polling requests; and  
7           receiving a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the  
8       responses of one or more interactive television viewers to the set of polling requests.

1           36. A communications apparatus being for polling interactive television viewers, the  
2       apparatus configured to:

3           prepare a set of polling requests that each ask an interactive television viewer to select  
4       an element from a group of two or more elements;  
5           connect to one or more set top systems of one or more interactive television viewers;

6           send the set of polling requests to the one or more set top systems of the one or more  
7   interactive television viewers;  
8           receive responses to the set of polling requests from one or more interactive television  
9   viewers;  
10          evaluate the responses to the set of polling requests; and  
11          prepare a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the  
12   evaluation of the responses to the set of polling requests.

1           37. A communications apparatus for participating in interactive television polling,  
2   the apparatus being configured to:

3           connect to a host;  
4           receive a set of polling requests;  
5           complete the polling requests;  
6           transmit the responses to the set of polling requests; and  
7           receive a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the  
8   responses of one or more interactive television viewers to the set of polling requests.

1           38. A computer program for polling interactive television viewers, the computer  
2   program being stored on a computer readable medium and comprising instructions for  
3   causing a computer to:

4           prepare a set of polling requests that each ask an interactive television viewer to select  
5   an element from a group of two or more elements;  
6           connect to one or more set top systems of one or more interactive television viewers;  
7           send the set of polling requests to the one or more set top systems of the one or more  
8   interactive television viewers;  
9           receive responses to the set of polling requests from one or more interactive television  
10   viewers;  
11          evaluate the responses to the set of polling requests; and  
12          prepare a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the  
13   evaluation of the responses to the set of polling requests.

1       39. A computer program for participating in interactive television polling, the  
2 computer program being stored on a computer readable medium and comprising instructions  
3 for causing a computer to:  
4           connect to a host;  
5           receive a set of polling requests;  
6           complete the polling requests;  
7           transmit the responses to the polling requests; and  
8           receive a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the  
9 responses of one or more interactive television viewers to the set of polling requests.